## The Anglican Digest



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#### **Editor**

The Rev. Canon Dr. Kendall S. Harmon
PO Box 2730, Summerville, SC 29484-2730
Phone (843) 821-7254
e-mail: ksharmon@mindspring.com

Managing Editor
The Rev. John Dryden Burton

#### **Board of Trustees**

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#### **Inquiries and Correspondence**

805 County Road 102 Eureka Springs, AR 72632-9705

Phone: 479-253-9701

FAX: 479-253-1277

email: anglicandigest@att.net

Web site: anglicandigest.org

Mr. Tom Walker, General Manager Capt. W.R. Swindells, Trustees' Warden



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## Advent: Subverting the Secular World

We have to tackle a number of inds of years. There's the school ear, the secular year, the shoping year, and the poor, neglectd church year. In a sense, we we in all of them and keeping our feet planted in each reality is to easy thing. All too often, we nly remember that the church as a year when we look at the ervice leaflet on Sunday and try o figure out which Sunday after which we are in.

Of all these years, the Christian rear presents the greatest chalenge. It reminds us that we are ritizens of another place and owe our allegiance to another ruler. The early Christians were persecuted and killed because they claimed that "Jesus is Lord." Perhaps today we are regarded as rather eccentric when we whisper the same words. They remind us that our faith is no private, personal thing, but that we are citizens of the kingdom of God.

We are subversive. We seek to bring the love of Christ into the lecular world because we believe that ultimately the world will be restored to God. In the

meantime, we work and pray to transform what is into what *shall* be.

The Season of Advent begins another year. It sets our sights on the miracle of Christ's birth, that God invaded this planet in the form of a helpless child. This vulnerable God walks with us, takes our flesh, recreates the human race, suffers, dies and so is in all our sufferings and in our deaths. He rises again giving us the hope of resurrected life in a new heaven and a new earth.

We perhaps moan about a secularized Christmas that begins before Thanksgiving and ends abruptly on the day after Christmas. Rather than moaning, we can meet the challenge it presents. We can be subversive by keeping Advent in holy preparation. We can keep Christmas by observing the twelve days in joy, gratitude, and compassion for God's poor and needy, rather than throwing out the tree on December 26th!

Above all we can humble ourselves before the baby who is King, and offer him our lives in obedience and hope.

The Rev. Tony Clavier,
 St. Paul's, La Porte, Indiana

## For Friends and Kindred

Have mercy, O Jord, upon all those whom Thou hast associated with us in the bonds of friendship and kinship, and grant that they, together with us, may be so perfectly conformed to Thy holy will that, being cleansed from all sin, we may be found worthy, by the inspiration of Thy love, to be partakers together of the blessedness of Thy heavenly kingdom, Through our Jord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

The Gallican Sacramentary

## Darkness to the Bright Light!

am writing on All Saints' Day nd it strikes me that in nature, Il is preparing for the apparent eath and famine of winter. eaves are falling and being athered and burned. Animals re preparing their stockpiles for vinter hibernation, to emerge gain around Easter! December as the shortest day in terms of ight. There is apparent death, old, and infinite darkness round.

by contrast, the church gives us vision of light, life, and glory. n November we celebrate the reat vision of the Communion of Saints, the church triumphant nd the church expectant, and he universal reign of Christ the Ging. In December we enter the ew church year in the season of dvent and are presented with he vision of Christ's return in lory, power, and majesty and vith the ultimate themes of eath, judgment, heaven, and ell. "Hark a thrilling voice is ounding!" When light is sparse our Northern Hemisphere, the hurch plays on darkness and

light in the great theme of Advent. In a very real sense, the church's sacred marking of time runs upstream against what is happening in the Northern hemisphere's natural order and in our culture. This is the way it is supposed to be. All too often the church is conformed to the world and our culture instead of being transformed into the likeness of Christ. The kingdom of God is an upside-down, topsy-turvy world and Christian living should be filled with creative paradoxes as the essential truths of faith are expressed. The instrument of death becomes the means of eternal life. We dare, on the Feast of the Nativity, to proclaim that God, who is Other, takes on our flesh and our human nature. The one who dwells in "light inaccessible" becomes vulnerable to death, thereby overcoming it. Ordinary time is transformed into sacred time by the markings of the liturgical year.

The readings in Advent present us with lofty and awesome images and visions. The great hymns of Advent with their rolling phrases and majestic music inspire us. Advent is a time when limited and narrow vision is challenged, transformed, and expanded. I am aware of the tragedy of a closed mind, especially in the life of faith. Too often, our anxieties and insecurities deaden our capacity for imagination, wonder, awe, joy, and praise. When these capacities are narrowed, I think it is hard for the Imago Dei, the image of God, in which we are created, to flourish. Too often, this Imago is suffocated and strangled by selfabsorption. Advent is a time for God to stretch our horizons and broaden our capacity for imaging.

rayerful, and devout observation of the Advent season, allowing the pressures of a frenetic, secular preparation simply to pass over you. For many years I did internal and institutional battle against this. That only created frustration and resentment—not good qualities for the preparation for The End! Much better to simply let the demands pass through you and move forward to the Last Things.

 The Rev. Andrew Sloane, St. Paul's, Washington, D.C.

#### Hymn for 9/11

Two numbers are forever etched Into our hearts this day.
Lord, 9/11 marks us still
As wounded and dismayed.
The number nine, perfection's sign That points us to above.
To One who hears our every cry And answers, then, with love.

Eleven, Lord, a sign of loss,
Betrayal and betrayed;
Revealing sin, the lies and hate,
That scar us day by day.
As towers fall, as terror strikes
We feel our cross of pain.
As heroes rush, your healing brings:
A gift from Easter's reign.

Ten years have passed and now we mark
The depths of that dark day,
As we draw closer to the One
Who promises the way
To move beyond our brokenness,
Of days like 9/11;
To build twin towers
of peace and love
And make earth more
like heaven.

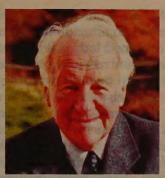
© J.M.A. Wright, 2011, Tune: Kings-fold, arr. Vaughan Williams

The Rev. Canon J. Michael
 Wright, Grace Church,
 Charleston, South Carolina

#### A Final Tribute to John Stott (1921-2011)

The time of my departure has ome. I have fought the good fight, I ave finished the race, I have kept to faith. From now on there is eserved for me the crown of rightousness, which the Lord, the rightous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all the have longed for his appearing. I Tim. 4.4b-8)

n late July, 2011, the world lost n obedient servant of Christ. ohn Stott, evangelist and author, astor and statesman, died eacefully in a retirement home outh of London, surrounded by oved ones and listening to Handel's Messiah and a reading f II Timothy. He had become uite infirm, having worn out his ody through a rigorous and scetic habit of life that included laily devotions at 5 a.m. and a unishing schedule of teaching, reaching, writing, and internaional travel. Having lost much of his sight and mobility over the ast couple of years, in the last ew months he was plagued by pain and spoke of "the imprisonnent" of his condition. Now he nas been liberated, having been



saved for his Lord's heavenly

kingdom (II Tim. 4.18).

Although three biographies have already been written about him, it will take many years to take the true measure of John's impact in the world. In 2005 Time magazine identified him as one of the world's 100 most influential people, and his more than fifty books have been read by millions around the globe. But the sheer range of people who are now feeling compelled to write testimonials and reflections about him is evidence that his influence was beyond what any of us can imagine. Here we have a tribute from Billy Graham, while there we have a touching story of an individual who came to faith through his preaching. Here is an account of John Stott taking a lead in high level ecumenical conversations, while there is the remembrance of the time he swam Arctic waters in an effort to help recover a drowned lad. All afternoon I have been receiving telephone calls from friends wishing to express their sorrow and share their memories, and this too is one of his legacies in my life: he has drawn me into a network of relationships with people who, like me, have been challenged and inspired by him.

I have my own personal remembrances of John, of course, having served closely with him as his Study Assistant nearly thirty years ago. My favourite picture of him is one I took when we were on a bird-watching holiday together in Portugal. We had a few moments before our flight left Faro. Not wanting to miss an opportunity of spotting one more specie, we struck out for the airport perimeter. The grey flannel trousers and blue jacket, the posture and the intensity, the hushed "Look there!" at a beautiful avian display, this is a memory of John that I shall never forget.

I have often been asked what is the most significant thing I learned from John when I was with him. As I have moved through various stages in my Christian development, I have

found my answer to this quess tion changing. Where once tried to emulate his self-discii pline and homiletic style, today remember his loyalty, integrity and humility. There was a moment in 1984 when he tool issue with the Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, over provocative statements the bish op had made about Jesus' resurt rection. It is a mark of his respect and charity that John did not rush into print with a rebuttal Rather he sought a personal audience with Bishop Jenkins to make sure that he understood the bishop's position and to give the bishop a chance to respond to his own concerns. John's sense of fairness and the fact that he did not savour argument, did, on occasion, put him at a disadvantage. In a public debate with Bishop Spong he came off badly when Bishop Spong departed from the rules and left John unprepared to answer. John rued the event, but not because he had been treated so poorly. He was concerned that the audience had not been furnished with a sufficient defence of the truth as he saw it.

The last time I saw John was a year ago in January. Our conversation was wide ranging. He

sked after Fawna and the girls. Ie wanted to know what I was eading and writing about. He sked about the diocese and varbus mutual friends. He asked what I thought about N.T. Vright's doctrine of justification I don't think he was fully peruaded that Tom Wright's take n the atonement was sufficienty substitutionary!). And he alked wistfully about the state f evangelicalism in Britain and North America. The fragmentaion and internal disputes were liscouraging to him. But his aith was strong, and, with a winkle in the eye, he said that he vas looking forward to "that lay." Then he asked me to pray or him.

In his commentary on II

limothy John wrote:

As the leaders of the former generation die, it is all the more urgent for hose of the next generation to step orward bravely to take their place. Fimothy's heart must have been projoundly moved by this exhortation from Paul the old warrior who had ed him to Christ. [...] We cannot test for ever on the leadership of the preceding generation. The day somes when we must step into their hoes and ourselves take the lead. That day had come for Timothy. It omes to us all in time.

In my mind, John's passing marks the end of an era when there were giants in our land. I have long wondered where these leaders are that can fill his shoes. and I continue to pray that God would raise up people of John Stott's calibre once again in the Church. But I must also reckon with the fact that these shoes lie empty before me, unworthy as I am even to try them on. And so I plead for grace and mercy to take the fight, the race and the faith forward in the name of Jesus.

John often said that at his funeral he wished to have Charles Wesley's "Jesus! the Name high over all" sung. As the hymn ends, so ended the earthly life of John Robert Walmsley Stott,

Happy, if with my latest breath I may but gasp His Name, Preach Him to all and cry in death, "Behold, behold the Lamb!"

—The Rt. Rev. Stephen Andrews, Bishop of Algoma, Canada

[From his blog Benedictus Benedicat at stephenalgoma.typepad.com/benedictus-benedicat/]

#### "Gladde Things"

Of gladde things there be four, ay four:

A Larke above ye olde nest blithely singing,
A wild rose clinging

In safety to a rock, a Shepherd bringing

A Lambe found in his arms,
And Christmasse Bells a-ringing
— Author Unknown

Good Tidings! Advent is a season abounding with symbolism. The poem called "Gladde Things" is a Christmas poem of centuries past. In truth, it reads almost like a fourteenth century Christmas card. However, a bit of ancient lore might help to give us a richer meaning of the words the author has written. After all, from a twenty-first century perspective, we might find ourselves wondering why the four things would include a bird, a flower, a shepherd, and bells.

To begin with, a lark is a bird which symbolizes merriment — as it was believed that the lark sang hymns at the gates of heaven. In fact, it was the lark that announced the coming of the day. Because of the bird's boundless energy, it is said the lark is also the symbol of hope, happi-

ness, and of good fortune.

Early Christians identified the five petals of the rose with the five wounds of Christ. On a side note, throwing rose leaves into an open fire is said to bring good luck.

There can be no doubt that the Shepherd carrying a lamb in his arms is a symbol of Christ as the Good Shepherd, who brings salvation to all.

Christmas Bells call people to prayer and worship and are used to remind us of heavenly things which reign supreme over the things of this world. Bells symbolize the joyful sending forth of the glad tidings of the Good News.

Knowing the symbolism of the four "gladde things" brings at deeper, richer understanding of the lovely poem. The same cambe said of our Advent season itself. Immerse yourself into the symbolism of this holy season, and in so doing bring an element of mystery into your Advent experience, and deepen the joy of this holy time.

The Rev. Melanie L.
 McCarley, Zion,
 Charles Town, West Virginia

5 Years Ago in TAD

# the anglican digest

A miscellary reflecting the words and work of the faithful throughout the Anglican Communion.

#### **ANGELS**

Entertaining angels unawares" is, necessarily, a somewhat hazrdous responsibility. For the good host is always at pains to discovr what the guest likes to eat and drink and, above all, tries to make he unheralded visitor feel at home.

Yet the Scriptures see it the other way around. We are the ones who are ill at ease, caught off our guard and fearful of that sudden news or the invasion of our little worlds by a larger frame of reference. Angels in the Bible always seem to go out of their way to produce ust the right refreshment at the right moment in the most unlikely places. Above all they support us and make us feel at home in the providence and presence of God. "Fear not, Mary."

Their confidence is greater because their experience is larger. They re not imprisoned in a world-view which is bounded by the limits

f human senses.

Christians, in the spirit of Columbus, must refuse to believe we hall fall off the edge by going too far. In the meantime, the angels are pilots, commissioned by God to steer us safely home as brave new men and women ready to live in a brave new world.

- The Rt Rev Michael Marshall, Episcopal Director

Ye watchers and ye holy ones...



WE ARE ACCUSTOMED, of course, to the pictures and images of angels in religious art. Hence, it is difficult for us to keep alive much sense of awe, much less of dread, with respect to the sudden appearances of these glorious fellow creatures.

The term "fellow creatures" strikes a presumptuous note, however. Who are we, poor sublunary mortals and sinners, to claim fellowship of any sort with these bright immensities? If we share the humility and clarity of vision of the patriarchs and the prophets, we will do what they did: fall on our faces when these ministers of the Most High come near us.

And yet the angels themselves, if we may speak thus, would insist that, glorious and terrible as they are, they are, precisely, fellow creatures with us. They are

never to be mistaken for the Divine Majesty itself. They may be infinitely higher up the scales of being than we are; but between that whole scale of creatures and the Most High himself, there is a distance and a difference so uttenthat the distance between seraphim and flatworms dwindles to insignificance.

And, paradoxically, we creatures of mortal flesh here on earth—we humans—enjoy a dignity that no archangel or cherub, nay nor the seraphim themselves, enjoy. It is that this flesh of ours has been raised to incomparable glory by having been taken on by God himself in the mystery of the Incarnation in which, to borrow the language of the Athanasian Creed, (The Book of Common Prayer, page 864) we find not so much a bringing of the Godhead down to

man as to a taking of the manhood into God. For this reason, by the way, we find in the hymn, "Ye Natchers and Ye Holy Ones," a human being addressed as "higher than the cherubim, more gloribus than the seraphim." The words refer, of course, to Mary. While an angel was given the task of announcing to our flesh that it was to be glorified in the Incarnation, the task of bearing the Incarnate God was given to this flesh of ours.

But, of course, in the city of God it never comes to a matter of jock-eying for position, or of comparing credentials, or of sniffing at questions of dignity and precedence. No angel will ever quarrel with any of us about comparative dignity, and, until we know something we don't know now, our postures in front of them had better be prone.

I SOMETIMES FIND myself peering into the dimness of what we mortals are permitted to know about angels. Of course, the first and perhaps most important thing to be observed is that our knowledge of angels amounts to almost nothing. We just do not know much about them. Insofar as they appear at all on the stage in the Bible, they are like the wind itself; we don't know from whence they

have come and whither they have gone. Suddenness and peremptoriness seem to mark their appearances. We are not at all prepared for their entry: the drama is going along, quietly or turbulently that does not seem to have the slightest effect on the angels' appearances. Then, all of a sudden, bang in the middle of the stage, dominating the scene utterly, there is an angel, with no apology or by-your-leave, or any of the complicated protocol that might mark the entrance of a herald from even the greatest Oriental potentate.

The chief characters in the Bible find themselves hailed by these mighty spirits: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, Elijah, Zechariah, Joseph, Mary, and Peter. And in virtually every case the human reaction is at the very least one of awe, and probably of terror. The Bible stories do not always describe the arrival of an angel as attended by dazzling light or braying trumpets, nor the angel as particularly gigantic in size or specially frightening in appearance. Any of these qualities would arouse awe and terror in us mortals. But sometimes the story simply says an angel appeared to so-and-so. We have no reason to believe that the apparition had anything visibly terrifying about

it. But we find that Zechariah or Mary or whoever it may be in the story in question is nonetheless filled with fear. What may we conclude from this?

Of course, any of us may experience a start if we look up from our dishpan or our desk and find



someone standing next to us without our having been aware that anyone had come into the room. But in these cases the shock is small and momentary and then we say, "Ah, it's you"; or, if it is a stranger we may say something like, "Uh — can I help you?" wondering all the while how he got there and hoping that it is the meter man. But to these angelic visitations, awe, fear, and terror even, seem to be the appropriate and inevitable responses.

It is not for nothing that we are told so little in the Bible about angels. They are, if we may speak abruptly, none of our business most of the time. Our business is to learn to love God and our neighbor: Charity, Sanctity. There is our whole work, cut out for us. There are ten thousand utterly fascinating diversions possible — all

sorts of things to siphon our energy and attention away from the task at hand — everything from brutish pursuits like sheer lechery to arcane refinements like angelol-

I myself am one who would like: to make his pilgrimage to St: Michael's Mount. The figure of that glorious archangel, doing battle with the Prince of Darkness: I love it. I love the vision of that mighty warrior, lordly and dread, fighting for us. There are very few pictures in all of myth and poetry equal to that of the archangel Michael riding armed with the might of the Lord of Hosts to crush Satan and his hordes. We may, it seems to me, let our imaginations reach as high as they can for imagery to bring to this event: all the flashing swords and snorting warhorses and glittering armor and fluttering pennons and sounding of alarms and excursions that ever regaled our childhood imaginations in tales of faerie and chivalry those are all most appropriate.

AND YET. And yet. Glorious as this is, we must take our cues from the way the story itself tells it. The Bible is the Book with the story in it. You have to follow how the author tells his story. You have to stick with his own emphases. You

cannot go tooting off to write your own story and then call it his. And it is surely worth noticing that in Bible stories almost no space is given to the angels. Their entries are sudden and brief and then they exit. Michael himself is mentioned in only three books of the Bible, and in every case the reference is very brief and mysterious, as though we were given a glimpse through a cranny out onto huge vistas where heavenly dramas were in progress. Daniel mentions Michael as somehow assisting perhaps another angel (you cannot quite tell from the account) in getting past some evil power in route to Daniel with a message; in another place Daniel refers to Michael as a great prince somehow charged with the defense of the people of God.

And then just once St John the Divine, in the Apocalypse, pulls back the curtain and lets us have a glimpse of St Michael leading his angels against the dragon and prevailing. What oratorios could be written about that. What epics.

But again, No.

It seems sufficient that we be aware that our story here is part of a gigantic drama in which all heaven, earth, and hell strive. A Christian is aware of living under titanic mysteries that arch and loom above his head. That much,

at least, he is given to know. And in that drama the angelic hosts participate. The Bible never spells out much about them. There is a fascinating literature of angelology. Tradition lets us imagine nine orders in the heavenly hierarchy, starting at the bottom with angels, whose ministry seems to be very much towards us, right on up the scale, through archangels, virtues, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, to the cherubim who attend the worship of God, and the altogether mysterious seraphim.

It is salutary for us to mark and remember these glorious fellow creatures and their part in the divine drama. It does have an effect on us to know about them. It is humiliating for us to think of their splendor, and encouraging and consoling to us to think that some of them at least are appointed by God as ministers in our behalf, and it is thrilling to look into the Last Things and see St Michael there fighting for us. But all crowns and diadems and wreaths of glory will be cast down at the Last Day before the sapphire throne on which the Ancient of Days sits and before whom the very seraphim cover their faces.

- Dr Thomas T. Howard in Christianity Today

#### 50 Years Ago in TAD



THE gaunt branches of the euphorbia trees form a natural chapel around the rock; a crucifix hangs at the entrance; the murmur of insects fills the place; the sunshine slants in long, narrow lines through the trees; and a candle gutters on the rock which covers the scourged body of the martyr, Manche Masemola.

In the heart of the mountains of Sekhukhuniland, in the heathen vastnesses of the Northern Transvaal, an Anglican girl of eighteen, Manche Masemola, on 4 February A.D. 1928, resisted unto blood for the sake of Christ. She was determined to attend the baptism classes in the face of the fierce opposition of her parents. She and her cousin Lucia, who lived with them, used to steal away to the classes, although they were always severely punished on return.

Her priest, Father Moeka, was concerned about rumors of her mistreatment. "I have heard that your people are troubling you," he said.

"That is nothing," Manche replied. "If they cut off my head, I will not leave my faith."

"It will be sometime yet before you are ready for baptism," said Frr Moeka. "It will not be fair to the other members of the class if I baptize you before them."

Manche looked at him. She had found the pearl of great price, and was already beginning to be dimly aware of what its cost would be. "I may be baptized with a better baptism," she said.

The persecution at home increased. She was thrashed every time she returned from class, and people began to notice the bruises on her body. Lucia was sent away because she was felt to be encouraging Manche. In fact, she was. "We have turned away from the darkness to the Light and we must never go back to the darkness," Lucia said to Manche as she urged her on to endurance.

Manche's courage did not falter. "I will never go back from the faith, whatever they do. I shall laugh the more they hurt me." The day Lucia left, she saw Manche's mother beat her with a stick and her father lash her with a rein.

Her mother's anger grew fanatial. One day while they were plowng with oxen in the fields, she oticed Manche preparing to go to lass. She took a whip and chased er around the field into a little rain hut, and there tried to stab her vith a spear through the thin bark valls. When the infuriated mother et fire to the hut, Manche escaped nd ran to tell Fr. Moeka and her ousin Lucia.

Once again Fr. Moeka wondered vhether to baptize her, but the girl vould not be made an exception. "I hall be baptized with my own lood."

"Are you not afraid to die for our faith?" the priest asked.

"Never," she replied.

She might have hesitated, avoidd the classes in hope of winning ver her parents; she might have vaited until the boy to whom she vas engaged came home from his vork in the town to win his support gainst her family, but an eagerness or Christ constrained her.

She never went to the class again. Ier mother took away all her lothes to prevent her going out. he was seen once or twice at dawn, neeling naked in prayer near her ome, but she ran in when she realzed she was not alone.

Her parents consulted the witchoctor about the "Christian devil" hich seemed so intractable in their

daughter. It was believed that the devil entered through the smoke of the incense used in the church, and must be vomited or beaten out both by medicine and the whip. What advice the witchdoctor gave is not known, but one morning, her parents dragged Manche naked from the house and began to flog her. When one tired, the other carried on.

She fell before the onslaught; the blood flowed from the scourged and mangled body as she was caught up into Paradise. Frightened then at what they had done, the parents sewed up the body in a blanket and, finding no place for it in their heathen cemetery, buried it secretly under a large rock.

That is the rock around which the euphorbia trees now lift their branches. That is the rock by which the Bishop of Pretoria sang the Eucharist of a Virgin Martyr last year, in the presence of three hundred of the faithful who had come by car, bus, and foot to that lonely spot.

She was unlettered; her culture was that of tribalism and the care of land and cattle. She had never seen beyond the hills of her own village. In the eyes of the world, she was one of the "last," an ignorant native herd-girl unworthy of care or attention, but she who was last has become first. Once again, our Lord has exalted the humble and meek, and the standards of the world have

been turned upside down by a young African girl, who in the heavenly places pleads for her own people and all the people of Africa, that the eyes of their blindness may be opened to that Light which is peace and unity and, in the end, perfect joy. —A monk of the Community of the Resurrection: taddled from the (London) *Church Times*.



"To most people there is something passing strange and even unnatural about a group of men whose one aim is to sever themselves in seclusion from the workaday world. Unnatural it may be, especially in an age when preoccupation with this world and its business is regarded almost universally as the only natural way to live. It is certainly supernatural in its inspiration, and that is its great justification. Such a deliberate withdrawal from the world constitutes a quiet but dramatic reminder of something which modern man is supremely in danger of forgetting, that man's abiding peace must be sought elsewhere than in this world and the lusts thereof." - The (London) Church Times, on the occasion of the Bishop of Chichester's blessing and dedication of new and extended parts of the monastery of the Community of the Servants of the Will of God.



THE Diocese of Arkansas has the only diamond mines in North America, thirteen state and two national parks, first-class fishing areas, natural hot springs, 53,104 square miles, 51 parishes and miss sions, 38 priests or deacons, 106 law readers, and 12,000 Churchmen Despite a decrease in state popular tion, the Church has grown almoss four percent in membership in the last year. Behind the push is the Bishop of Arkansas; upon his enthronement as diocesan in 1956 he instituted a Diocesan Develope ment Program financed by parish and mission pledges totalling over \$332,000. \$15,000 went to the University of the South, part was used to shore up the physical fabrid of the diocese, and the remainder to purchase mission sites in Church less towns. [The Bishop is one of the few in the American episcopate to be trusted with a typewriter: he was author of the EBC 1954 Spring Selection, The Miracle of the Cross and of an account of the Central High School integration embroilment, Bigger Than Little Rock. He is one of the contributing authors o the EBC 1962 Spring Selection.] -Taddled from The Episcopalian

#### I Remember Pearl Harbor — Sort Of

In late summer of 1941, my nother and I set off on a journey rom upstate New York to Ionolulu, Hawaii. I was four nonths old and my parents' firstorn. She was twenty-seven years ld, recently released from a uberculosis sanitarium, and set n getting us close as she could to ny father in his first assignment s a new Navy chaplain, aboard ne USS Curtiss at Pearl Harbor. he had gone to the town library b look for Hawaii in an atlas; she ad no idea where it was.

Heading west by train, she ecided in Chicago to try to get into a nearby Navy base and ask or help. It turned out to be a mall air station, and word pread quickly about the chapain's wife and baby trying to each the West Coast. In short order, the pilots took charge. As hey radioed ahead, we were lipped onto a succession of genrally westward-heading DC-3 argo flights.

For days, wedged among rates and boxes, Mom was connually airsick, so I was taken are of by cockpit crews, which reluded regular feedings of cofee and donuts to which I am

addicted to this day. She and I eventually reached San Francisco, got down to the docks, and booked last-minute passage aboard a Matson Line ship to Honolulu. She had never been farther than 100 miles from her birthplace.

By the end of September, we were settled in a little beach cottage — shack really — on Waikiki near the Royal Hawaiian. My father was able to get a few hours of shore leave when he was in port and join us several times a month that fall.

Early on Sunday, December 7, Dad was preparing for "Divine Services" aboard ship, when he heard the aircraft above. Fourteen miles away at Waikiki, so did my mother. When the strafing began, showing the exquisite practicality of mothers everywhere, she placed me in a corner of the cottage and then she ran down to the water's edge. She and I stayed this way for hours, ninety feet apart, while the attack went on. She said later that she wanted my father to have a son if he lost his wife. And she wanted him to have a wife, so that he could have more children, if he lost his son. By the end of that day, we were a wartime military family, like thousands of others.

For several weeks after the attack, my parents had no direct contact, but Dad eventually got ashore, and we were reunited, alive and unhurt. Panic and fear of another attack still consumed people on the Islands, and word got out among the little beachfront Navy community that a chaplain was ashore.

Military families and some locals started showing up with their children, saying they wanted them baptized before the next attack. I had not been baptized

either.

My father — staid Presbyterian Easterner — waded into the Waikiki surf in his uniform. On that day he baptized over forty children and adults, including me, by immersion or not, depending on the size of the wave. My "baptismal certificate" is Dad's handwritten note in a little standard issue military New Testament, just above the greeting from President Roosevelt.

Every Advent I remember Pearl Harbor. Not really, of course. I remember what my family told me about that place and time, and about other times and places later. The older I get, the harder it is to distinguish what I experienced from what I was told. I think it probably doesn't matter.

My parents' generation has been called "The Greatest Genera ation," which may be true. But think of them as the most adventurous generation. They grew up in the Great Depression. They had nothing to lose and no reason to stay put. They got up and out and rarely looked back. I am retired now and swap stories with other retirees. We have a common probo lem: our children think our carr do not have enough airbags for us to safely transport grandchildren I think of my mother and our journ ney across the country and across the ocean. We didn't even have a car.

Dad stayed in the Chaplair Corps for twenty-eight years. We lived in thirteen states. We had a special ritual when we got order to move: we would take our set or dishes out to the driveway, and everyone would throw them as the garage door. It was time to move on.



Walter S. Peck and Marjorie Mills Peck are buried in the chaplains' section at Arlington National Cemetery.

> The Rev. Fred Peck Vancouver, Washington

#### A Curious Gift

"Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh"

Matthew 2:1-12

he Magi traveled a long disance over the Arabian desert, ersistent in following the bright tar until it stopped, marking the pot where they would worship he Christ Child. Their first gesure upon arriving at the creche vas to bow down to show homge to the child. Their visit culninated with the presentation of ifts of gold, frankincense, and nyrrh. One can readily compreend the purpose behind the givng of the gold and the frankinense to the Baby Jesus. Their Itility is obvious. But the meanng behind the gift of myrrh is a it puzzling in light of its purose.

In the ancient world, myrrh was a precious commodity, celebrated for its medicinal as well as romatic properties. It was good or easing digestion, spreading warmth through a sick body, and a disinfectant for clothes and edding. Most famous of all, hough, myrrh was celebrated or its use in embalming. A curius gift, it would seem, to take to the family of a newborn baby. A somber offering - one more suited to ease the ending of a life than to celebrate its beginning. The Bible tells us quite explicitly that it was God's Word made flesh - fragile flesh; flesh subject to pain and weakening, and eventual death and anointing for burial — descriptors that remind us that even at the beginning of Jesus' life, Herod set out to kill the Holy Child. And a few years later, crowds from his own home town attempted to throw him off a cliff. His closest friends denied him and fled from him at the dangerous end. Throngs clamored for his blood, calling "Crucify him!"

Myrrh is a bittersweet gift. Though we'd prefer to gloss over it, it reminds us that every birth is accompanied by a death of sorts. If the true God is, in fact, the One who comes to dwell among us at Christmas, to be manifested to all the world at Epiphany, then all the other gods must perish. If we journey to Bethlehem with the Magi as adults with inquisitive minds and discerning hearts, we arrive with them at the manger of a death: the death of the gods we have created for ourselves out of

our infatuation with success and popularity. We become radically cognizant that this is the death of our obsession with appearances; the death of our resigned insistence that we have everything all figured out, and that nothing not even hope - can break into our world to surprise us anymore because we have seen the way life is and we are heart-sick, mind-sick, and body-weary of it all. We come to the death of all our old, ego-encapsulated habits and are expected to bury them all under the straw behind the manger; and then to emerge into a strange new life - as if we, too, had somehow just been born.

In every birth, there is an element of death. If we will allow our minds to roam imaginatively around this text we will see foreshadowings of the crucifixion weaving its way through the narrative. There's the thorny tree whose resin glistens against the rough bark like drops of blood; the whiff of bittersweet fragrance that reminds us of how all that is precious in life is also passing. Perhaps we would be better off if we stopped trying to avoid such ominous shadows that clutter our lives; perhaps in this new year we need to surrender to our blind pursuit of unconditional happiness, and instead take a different road towards the abundantly more holistic life of fulfill ment by being faithful to God.

T. S. Eliot wrote a poem titled "The Journey of the Magi," reflecting, many years laters upon his pilgrimage to the place of holy birth. He writes of the harshness of travel, the regrets of leaving behind the comforts of home, and the strange spiritual apparitions that point beyonce themselves to the hidden work ings of God's providence. With affecting understatement, Elio: describes the encounter with the divine child in these words "And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon. Finding the place, it was (you may say) satisfactory." In other words, the end of his journey was a new begin ning that opened up into new and great mysteries.

And while in every birth we are cognizant of an element of death the Christian story handed down to us also proclaims that in every death there is the possibility of new birth. Out of the agony of crucifixion comes the amazement of resurrection. Out of the

ain of separation in this world omes the joy of reunion in the fe everlasting. Out of the endng of old habits of despair and esignation comes a new hope in the promises and providence of fod.

Laving made their visit to the hrist Child and given gifts, the lagi begin their long and arduus journey home. This time, owever, they'll return a differnt way. As Matthew tells us, And having been warned in a ream not to return to Herod, they ft for their own country by anothroad" (vs. 12). And while they Itered their route to avoid going rough Jerusalem again, it cerainly wasn't the only thing bout the Magi that had hanged. Returning home by nother route is a metaphor for ving a changed life, and by neir vulnerability in letting this oly moment speak to their earts, the Magi could make a lean break with some past pracces and habits and head home hanged and chastened, molded the shape of Christ's own trimph. This is how new life is reated from the old.

In our lives we also may noose to "take another route" in ght of our effectiveness as

Christians in being "salt and light" to a fragile world. We can decide to resist Herod in all his guises and go back home another way. We can resist all that kills childlike wonder, optimism, hope, imagination, play, creativity and adventure. We can also decide to pay close attention to all of life, including the silences, and to live less hurriedly and more openly and imaginatively so that we might catch sight of the shimmering star. Nearly everyone who encounters Jesus ends up going home another way. After they have met this Jesus, they seem incapable - or certainly unwilling — to go back the same way they had come.

Our journey of faith can begin anew at the altar. And as we come forward to receive the bread and wine — just as the Wise Men ate of the good news and drank in Christ's Incarnation — may our New Year's resolution reflect our willingness to go a new way into living our lives. May we be changed not just by the journey, but by our destination. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Craig M. Kallio,
 St. Stephen's,
 Oak Ridge, Tennessee

## The Vast Expanse of Space and Time

The vast expanse of space and time

Appears to me in moonlight skies

And in the sands of deserts deep And in the bright sun's morning rise.

In ending and beginning times
Of endless light from stars
unknown

Whose pulses through the void of space

Reach destinations to be shown. Lord, I am yours, entire and whole.

You made me, love me, flesh and soul.

In vast expanse of power and might,

From darkness, brought me to the Light.

- (c) Sandra Davis

#### The Pilot

A Sunday school teacher was speaking to a group of four-year olds about Jesus, Joseph, and Mary. After the lesson, the kidd were asked to draw a picture depicting their favorite part of the story. The teacher the shared the pictures the childrendrew with the entire class. She got pictures of the Baby Jesus in the manger with animals, she got pictures of the three wise men.

Then she got to a picture from Jimmy, a picture of an airpland with four people on it. She called Jimmy up to explain his picture. She told Jimmy that she could see Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus, obviously in their "flight" to Egypt. She didn't understand why there was another man on the plane. Jimmy quickly explained, "That's Pontius, the

pilot."

"If in your heart you make a manger for his birth, then God will once again become a child on earth."



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#11

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TAD11-4

## Spending Time with the One Who Loves Us Most

For many, one of the great joys of Christmas is to be with those we love, to enjoy one another's company, exchange gifts, sit lown to share a feast of our avorite foods, and listen to Christmas music. Unfortunately for others, the absence of these things is the great sorrow of Christmas and often results in a sense of loneliness, emptiness, and despair.

We can easily get so caught up n the celebration of Christmas or ost in a state of loneliness and despair that we fail to truly appreciate and give thanks to God for the gift he gave us on that first Christmas — the gift of himself.

No greater gift has been given! No greater gift could be received! n giving us himself, he has given us the VERY BEST!

Why do we sometimes have rouble receiving and appreciating God's gift? Why are we willing to jump through hoops to be with family and friends but often that the door on the one who oves us the most? We often talk about our love for God and

desire to be with him, but fail to make time with him a priority in our lives.

I am ashamed to think of how many times I allow other things to come between me and the Lord. How many times have I failed, despite my best of intentions to spend more time with the Lord in prayer, reading and meditating on his word? How many times have I stumbled through life in the shadow of darkness rather than walked in peace guided by the Light of Christ?

The gift God gave the world that very first Christmas — the gift of his Son, the gift that lives and dwells in us through the Holy Spirit, is a gift unlike any other. The gifts of this world that we often work so hard to buy or make (as loving and thoughtful as they may be) to give to friends and loved ones at Christmas ultimately will break, wear out, get used up, outgrown or stored away only to be forgotten. They can't compare to God's gift.

God's gift is all loving, almighty, and eternal. He is the Word made flesh, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, the Light of

the World, The Way, The Truth and The Life, the Savior of the World.

In giving us his Son, God the Father invites us into a special relationship with him — a relationship that is only possible through Jesus Christ. The relationship that he wants for us is not temporary, but eternal. It is not a relationship of convenience but one of total commitment. The relationship God the Father wants for us is one of truth, joy, peace, grace, total and unconditional love.

If we are to grow in this relationship, it is essential that we open our hearts and souls and minds to him; that we intentionally spend time with him in prayer, reading and meditating on his word; that we worship and serve him, sharing the Gospel with all who will receive it.

Perhaps if we can come to see the Bible for what it truly is the Living Word of God; a means through which God continues to speak to us today; a testimony to all that God has done, is doing and will do; an opportunity to spend time with the One who loves us more than any other; perhaps then it will (if it hasn't) already) become a priority in our daily lives. It will be a gift to be treasured, a desire we long for each day, a living encounter with Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy, Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us to hear them; read, mark, learn, and inwardly, digest them, that we may embraced and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesuss Christ... (BCP, Proper 28)

May the Lord bless each of us this Christmas with a burning desire to invite him into our family gatherings as well as our time alone; to be open to his presence in our prayers and in the study of his Word; to grow in relationship with him in order that we may receive and be transformed by his love, truly loving him in return with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. No greater gift can be given nor received, than the gift of God's love perfectly shared in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rt. Rev. William H. Love,
 The Albany Episcopalian,
 Albany, New York



#### HILLSPEAKING

HE POINT of viewing has changed — from the kitchen window of Miss innie's Cottage to the denvindows of the Farm House — ut the birds remain. They have een joined this year by two rabits, three deer, and four squirels at the Farm House feeding tation.

Why the rabbits come up to ne feeding station I don't know. They don't eat the fallen sunlower seed as do the squirrels nd the deer. They nibble on rass at the edge of it while the eer and squirrels join right in vith the birds. Whatever the reaon, they are welcome and the irds ignore them.

Watching the birds and aninals consists of a number of eyeppealing little sights:

Watching four or five male carlinals against a backdrop of ewly fallen snow; or

Watching a half dozen red vinged blackbirds frolicking in t Francis' birdbath; or

Watching the first robin of

spring in pursuit of the ill-fated early worm; or

Watching the four squirrels play ring-around-the-rosy on the trunk of a big maple tree; or

Watching a flock of gold finches on the lawn suddenly take wing; or

Watching the rabbits placidly nibbling grass while a doe helps herself to a drink from the birdbath outside the den window.

Not all these sights can be viewed every day but over a season most can be more than once.

When you are visiting Hillspeak keep your eye on the birds.

- The Trustees' Warden

[After more than three decades of service to the Anglican Communion as General Manager, Trustees' Warden, Operation Pass Along & Foland Library overseer, and writer of Atop Grindstone Mountain and Hillspeaking, Cpt. Swindells is ready for a break. This is his final Hillspeaking.]

#### ₩ DEATHS ₩

H THE REV. ARTHUR R. BART-LETT, 91, in San Pedro, California. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II. A graduate of Church Divinity School of the Pacific, he was ordained a priest in 1965 and remained active in ministry until his death. Fr. Bartlett was port chaplain and director emeritus of the Seamen's Church Institute of Los Angeles. He was affiliated with numerous maritime. community, and youth organizations over his 30-year career with the Seamen's Center where he retired as Executive Director in 1988. In 2009, he was named an honorary canon of the Cathedral Center of St. Paul.

The Rev. George R. Bog-DANICH, 88 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A graduate of Philadelphia Divinity School and Yale, Fr. Bogdanich was received from the Roman Catholic Church in 1950. He served in Oklahoma parishes until he went to Grace and St. Peter's, Hamburg, Connecticut in 1960. He served as their vicar and then priest until retiring in 1990. H THE REV. CANON BILLIE RO BOYD, 87, in Fort Worth, Texass He served in the U.S. Army in World War II, retiring as a majori He was ordained an Episcopai priest in 1970. Canon Boyco became the first priest canonical! ly resident in the Episcopai Diocese of Fort Worth in 1983 when he was named Canon to the Ordinary by the founding bishop, the Rt. Rev. A. Donald Davies. Canon Boyd was chaplain to the retired clergy during his own retirement and a good friend to the diocesan staff.

H THE REV. CAMILLE DESMAR-AIS, 79, in Birmingham, Alabama. A graduate of Gallaudet University and Virginia Theological Seminary, he became rector at St. John's in 1972. The Rev. Desmarais oversaw construction of church buildings at St. John's and at St. Mark's Church for the Deaf in Mobile. In 1996, he retired from St. John's and moved to Mobile, where, until his death, he served as priest ir charge of St. Mark's Church for the Deaf. He was also past president of the Episcopal Confer ence of the Deaf.

JACQUELINE ANN STERNER OUGLAS, 83, in Fayetteville, rkansas. A graduate of Indiana nd Ohio State Universities, she erved as Assistant Dean of Vomen at Texas Tech before ecoming Dean of Women at the Iniversity of Arkansas in 1961. efore retiring in 1993, she was rofessor of higher education nd Associate Vice Chancellor or Academic Affairs. She was ppointed to the University of rkansas Board of Trustees from 1975 to 1985. She was the first voman elected to the vestry of t. Paul's, Fayetteville, and also erved on the Executive Council f the Episcopal Diocese of rkansas as well as the Hillspeak Board of Trustees.

THE REV. WILLIAM M. FAY, 88, a Berkeley, California. A 1951 raduate of Virginia Theological eminary, Fr. Fay spent sevengen years among the Lakota of outh Dakota before becoming ector of Good Shepherd, leedley, California where he erved from 1971 to 1985. He lso led St. Clement's, Woodlake, rom 1985 until his retirement.

THE VERY REV. THE HON.

WYKEHAM-FIENNESS, 85, in Lincolnshire, U.K. A graduate of New College, Oxford, he was ordained in 1954. He was appointed Chaplain of Clifton College in 1958 and subsequently, Rector of Lambeth in 1963 and Dean of Lincoln in 1969, a position which he held for exactly 20 years.

¥ SISTER BONIFACE GOETZ, 83, in Green Lake, Wisconsin. She was the Mother Superior of the Order of the Holy Nativity. Sister Boniface entered the Sisterhood in 1957 at the Motherhouse in Fond du Lac. On the Feast of St. Teresa of Avila, Oct. 15, 1962, the Rt. Rev. William Hampton Brady administered her Life Vows. Sister Boniface immigrated to the United States in 1954 and joined the Episcopal Church. During her years in the community, she lived in houses of the Sisterhood in New York, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. She served as Sister-in-Charge, Novice Mistress, and the Reverend Mother Superior.

Morley, Jr., 94, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He was a son of author Christopher Morley, Sr.

Fr. Morley was decorated for service in World War II as an ambulance driver with the American Field Service attached to the British Army in Africa and the Middle East, and later in France with the U. S. Army. A priest of the Episcopal Church for over six decades, Fr. Morley served parishes in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Tennessee, and as priest associate of the Episcopal Order of the Holy Cross.

The Rev. Canon Walter Thomas Saffran, 82, in Jacksonville, Florida. A graduate of the School of Theology at University of the South, Sewanee, he was ordained in 1961 and served several parishes in Florida before becoming Canon to the Ordinary under Bishop Frank Cerveny in Jacksonville. He then was rector of Trinity, St. Augustine, for eight years. Canon Saffran also served as Chaplain for the Episcopal Church Women for 25 years.

THE REV. DR. RICHARD KEENE SMITH, 88, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He served in the European and Pacific Theatres in World War II. A graduate of

Seabury-Western Theologica: Seminary, he was ordained in 1952. Father Smith served as a priest in the Diocese of Minnesota for over 50 years and was active in prison ministries for over 40 years. He served as Chaplain for the Minneapolis Police for over 30 years as well as at Breck School and the Episcopal Church Home among several other organizations Until his death, Father Smith continued to minister to others including teaching Bible studies for adults and children at the Arbors at Ridges, Burnsville Minnesota. He was an honorary Ojibwe (Makaday Magua) and Lakota.

SURFACE JR., 84, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. After serving in the Navy during World War II, he returned to graduate from Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained a priest in 1952 and served as rector of Christ Church in Bowling Green from 1953 to 1992. He also served as chaplain at Western Kentucky University and founded St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glasgow. A leader in the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky

e served on its Standing Committee and Executive Council and was a seven-time leputy to General Convention.

THE REV. VIRGINIA HOMAS, 93, in St. Albans, Vermont. A 1978 graduate of utheran Theological Seminary n Philadelphia, she was one of he first women ordained a deaon in the Episcopal Church. following her ordination she rganized the Dolphin Program n the Philadelphia area. Dolphins are volunteers who call pon lonely people in nursing nomes and become their one-tone companions. The program pread nationwide over the ten rears prior to her retirement in 988. After relocating to Vernont, Deacon Thomas actively erved at St. Matthew's, Enosourg Falls, until the time of her leath.



Rest eternal, grant unto them O Lord, and let light-perpetual shine upon them.



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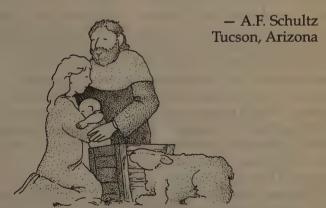


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## Manger Management 101

We homeworked Heav'nly Angel Hosts; Night-flocked shepherds; silage crib. Looked at bouncy Walmart ads and TV merchants' oily glib, Seen the gaudy, garish lights, Studied cloying Hallmark ooze, Witnessed false glad-handedness Gurgling forth from party booze. Researched precious little folks, Santa lap-perched in each store, Playing guilt to goad their parents Into buying more and more. Glorious, radiant Christmastide we've Viewed through lucre's light-bend prism. Teach us. Touch us, Manger Child. Redeem our cynicism.



### Driving and Aging

Unsafe driving at any age is of major concern. Currently, about 15% of drivers are over 65 and that is projected to increase to over 20%. Statistically, drivers over 75 are involved in fewer accidents but have more fatal crashes than any other age group. While birthdays don't cause the problems, health conditions do.

When should the older person stop driving? The American Medical Association guidelines assist doctors in assessing older patients' abilities to operate a motor vehicle. Some folks are unsafe at 50; some are safe at 90.

Several issues come into play. Vision is one. As we age, we lose peripheral acuity so cars "seem to come out of nowhere." Medical conditions such as macular degeneration and diabetes may also cause visual problems.

Another concern is cognition. After age 85, 40 to 50 percent of us will have some form of dementia. That's scary, and those folks should not be driving. With a parishioner who has dementia, the family asked the doctor to notify the DMV to cancel the driver's license. Not having a driver's license doesn't stop someone from driving. The only way

to prevent driving is to prevent access to a car. Hiding keys does n't work. Families have to get rice of the car if the loved one is uncooperative.

A third concern is deterioration of motor skills. As we age, none of us retains the reflexes we had in our youth. This is especially true if someone suffers from arthritis or neuropathy (abnor-

mal sensation).

A fourth issue is hearing. Try driving with the air conditioner and radio on, windows up, talking with a passenger and see if you can hear sirens or other out side sounds. Now imagine someone with a hearing deficit and you see why some cars don't pull over for emergency vehicles: Hearing problems require one to make a conscious effort to keep checking that rear view mirror something all drivers should do.

If you (or a loved one) are having issues, ask your doctor's assessment and if necessary, stop driving. The last thing you want is to kill or injure someone because you were too stubborn to move on to the next phase of your life.

Kate Reeves, Parish Nurse,
 St. Margaret's,
 Palm Desert, California

### Parish Hunt

Some people enjoy hunting for reasure. Wait until you try hunt-

ng for a new parish.

Over the years, our parish has epeatedly emphasized the necesity for greeting and being hostiable to visitors. It is absolutely orrect to do so. But, I want to look it from the viewpoint of the isitor who is hunting for a parish poin and to be a part of. Many f us have gone through this rocess due to military transfers or ew employment. Others are unting for a new church because heir old parish is no longer cceptable.

A necessity is being able to find he Church. If the parish has a lood website on the internet, a lot of problems can be solved. Having lood signage outside the Church lelps. Our parish has improved somewhat from the days when one could drive by and not realize a church building was back there in the trees. Adequate parking is also a good thing. My family would fuss if we had to park a quarter mile from a Church on a road with no sidewalks in an unknown neighborhood!

All of us have different expectations for what we want in a church. Some want services equal to those at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. Others are happier with a Mass on the beach in swim suits.

Which Prayer Book is being used? Was the sermon interesting and thought provoking or could it be used for a sleeping pill substitute? At what level of education was the sermon aimed? I have heard sermons best understood by preschoolers and others that assumed the congregation all had

## The Franciscan Order of the Divine Compassion

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e-mail minister-general@fodc.net or call 903-938-4246 degrees in theology. What is the quality of the music? Does the congregation sing or do they stay silent and dump the load on the choir? For some reason, a parish whose congregation enthusiastically sings is more likely to be a good parish than not. A lot of parishes still have room for improvement in this.

Is the parish friendly, and welcoming to strangers? Will there be hostility because of the visitor's

profession?

In 1977, on the west coast for two weeks of military training, I got dressed in the military equivalent of suit and tie and took a bus downtown. The church I found was cold physically, emotionally, and personally. No one bothered saying hello to a junior enlisted sailor. After the service, an assistant rector asked me not to return in uniform as he considered it to be inappropriate attire. Rage is an insufficient word to describe my feelings as I left that place. Later, I would deliberately go to a new parish in uniform as a testing point.

In another state, I didn't run into anti-military attitudes but rather a parochial viewpoint that only socially acceptable members of the local community were welcome in that parish. I also found deliberate racial segregation and gender bias.

My family ended up going to Catholic Mass on base. It was the only decent Church we could find in thirty miles in any direction. We weren't the only Episcopalians there who had made that choice.

Absolutely everything I men tioned above is secondary to one overriding consideration when choosing a new parish Church. Is that parish a Holy place of God? Is it a place where one can pray, talk to God, be heard, and hear from God? That is no idle question. have walked into a church where! felt I had entered the spiritual equivalent of a minefield and the next step I took could be the end of my relationship to God. A priest once described that feeling as recognizing that God hasn't been in that parish in a long time. It was a signal to get out of there and visit another Church.

An Episcopal Church in any part of the country and any diocese is made of people and is not just a structural building. How people in a parish relate to each other and to strangers is a determining factor in how they relate to God. A good relationship will convince visitors that a parish is a place to join and become a part of.

Ron Johanningsmeier,
 Church of Reconciliation,
 San Antonio, Texas

### They Need Not Go Away" Matthew 14:17

While backpacking in the Four orners area of Utah, I awoke in le middle of the night to the bund of a small animal scurryig around outside my tent. At ast, I hoped it was small. Earlier the evening we heard covotes alling in the deep canyons of rand Gulch. Curious, I nzipped the door of the tent hd crawled outside, headlamp nining in the darkness, to find a ox scurrying away.

tanding outside the tent, I urned off the headlamp, and boked up. In that moment, I saw nore stars than I had ever seen. here was a fullness, depth, blor, and abundance to this eavenly host that left me peechless. I will never forget it.

We were in the ancestral home f the Anasazi — from which the ueblo tribes arose — and it ccurred to me that the light rom some of those stars began s journey at the same time the nasazi lived in Grand Gulch, ome two thousand years ago. In nat moment, time and space eemed a seamless web of light. he light seemed to be everywhere, past, present, and future.

Anglican priest and physicist, John Polkinghorne, likened the dual nature of Jesus - human and divine - to the dual nature of light, which is both particle and wave. It is this incarnational understanding of Christ into which we live, and the abundance we find in the feeding of the five thousand. When the crowds pressed in upon them, the disciples urged him to send them away.

Jesus' response is a call to compassion — a summons to them to "suffer with" (com-passio) and take action to do justice (Hesed) to that suffering. It is a clear message to the disciples to see the situation differently: "They need not go away; you give them something

In truth, Jesus fed the disciples, who then fed the multitude. Perhaps this is a call to us to go and do likewise. It may be the disciples were reticent to feed the crowd because they feared what they had was simply not enough; they described it as "nothing." But in the hands of the Christ, our limitations become God's bountiful abundance. He was not asking the disciples to change their offering of bread and fish into something more abundant. He was asking them

to think more abundantly! He was asking them to change their ideas about the power of compassion.

That night in Utah, the light from the stars, a seamless tapestry of time and space, reminded me of the Eucharist foreshadowed in the feeding of the five thousand. Our participation in past reality, and calling down of the spirit are commemorations of the Last Supper in anticipation of the heavenly banquet to come.

In the meantime, we are called to participate in God's reconciling compassion here and now. Teresa of Avila said, "Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth, yours are the feet by which he is to go about doing good, and yours are the hands by which he is to bless us now."

Blessing, breaking, and giving . . . we know how to do this. Look up. Look around. The loaves and fishes spread, like light from distant stars, on that hillside long ago. Let us go and do likewise.

The Rev. Bill Harkins,
 The Cathedral of St. Philip,
 Atlanta, Georgia

## Stress-filled Days

The weeks running up to Christmas are some of the most stress-filled days of the years There is not only a sense of urgency about the season but a deep restlessness in the people about me and sometimes in my self. The sheer energy required in navigating the crowds at this time of the year has been known to undo even the most cheerful and inveterate souls of good will Shooting the rapids of the thoroughfares of commerce, negotiating the living whirlpools of seasonally engendered emotions, and surmounting the cross-currents of various human agendas can seriously undercut our ability to enter into the reality of the Advent and Christmas seasons. During the last century Matthew Arnold wrote the following lines:

> "We nod and glance and hurry by and never once possess our souls before we die."

It has become the unconscious habit of modern life to do everything in a hurry. This not only flirts with the real danger of shoddy workmanship and behavior but its pace, when unabated,

arries our souls further away om the knowledge and love of lod.

The Christian life which binds s to God requires time and uiet. A number of modern spirual writers have warned that ur knowledge is enormous, but ur wisdom is diminished. We an communicate instantly in eal time half a world away but have almost ceased to have nything to say that matters. I m often reminded of Bruce pringsteen's song lyric "57 hannels and nothing on."

The prayers and demeanor of

dvent reminds us of our need go to a secret place so as to be lone with God. Otherwise we ecome unfit as agents for the xternal work of God. Learning b live in love with our neighbor akes time and effort. Advent ecalls faithful Christians to give raver and intentional presence efore God priority in our daily fe. Even those who have "too nuch to do" need to cultivate the nowledge that eight hours of vork for which one hour of rayer prepares, is better than ine hours of work with praying eft out. Whatever is gained in uantity is lost in quality when ngagements, pleasures, and ctivities follow one upon another, without leaving prayer intervals for refreshment and renewal of strength by waiting upon God.

Just as the beauty of God's creation is better observed by walking or sitting still rather than from the window of a car, our relationships with each other and God are spoiled by hurry. Hurry undermines consideration and sympathy. It can lead to strangeness and indifference to those about us and God's good creation. Life is not a series of oranges to be squeezed dry and thrown aside. It is the making, giving, and growing parts of life that give the real basis for enjoyment. By them we enter a way of going on towards that perfection which is the Love of God.

> The Very Rev. William Willoughby III, St. Paul's, Savannah, Georgia

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# The Inauguration of God's Kingdom

Kecently a friend of mine challenged me to articulate what I believed about heaven and life after death. Of course, what I believe about heaven is inextricably intertwined with the liturgy commemorating events of Holy Week and Easter. Even in the convent, I am frustrated by the sense that we put a tremendous amount of energy rightly into Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday and then breathe a sigh of relief, have a feast on Easter Sunday, and then back to business as usual by at least Easter Tuesday. Isn't it as important to watch the progression of the Easter story from the early morning visit of the women on the first day to Jesus' sixth appearance story on the Sea of Galilee as it is to walk with Jesus on the way to the cross?

Reading Bishop N.T. Wright's Surprised by Hope and the story of Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor's experience of recovering from a rare form of cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 37 in A Stroke of Insight at the same time gave me a Biblically-based insight that I would like to share.

Dr. Jill's training is in brain anatomy, so she is eminently qualified to understand wha was happening to her. The iron was that the hemorrhage was it her brain's left hemisphere where most of her academic training was stored. While sh lost her technical knowledge almost completely and had to relearn that, the right hemi sphere was untouched. She say that the stroke was a blessing and a revelation. "I felt suspend ed between two worlds, caugh between two perfectly opposite planes of reality. For me, hel existed inside the pain of this wounded body as it failed miser ably in any attempt to interact with the external world, while heaven existed in a conscious ness that soared in eternal bliss." The left hemisphere suffered the loss; the right hemisphere regist tered only a sense of fluidity, o oneness with her surrounding without limit, and peace and joy She realized that her sense o time, past, present, and future were all learned skills of her lef brain. The right brain though only in terms of now.

 $\Gamma$ hat challenged me to think o the Resurrection and Paschaltide in terms of now also. Wha

uld my right brain undernd of Bishop Wright's ughts on the joys of Easter d the Resurrection now? The ort answer was that the surrection doesn't just mean t Jesus' Passion and Victory ows me to go to heaven when ie, although I believe that is e, as long as we think of heavand God together instead of a place separate from earth. pre profoundly and immedily, the Resurrection means the bstone of God's promises in Covenant with his chosen ople through Jesus the essiah. We have the prophecy St. John of a new heaven and a w earth in Revelation 20 and For now we are in the etween time," yes, new

here are you going when you here are you going when you it think I shall answer owhere else, but here." I shall so transformed that I shall seed in my flesh. Wouldn't that the greatest joke? The delightirony of being in heaven at same time as on earth...

usalem, but not yet.

t took her eight years to rain her thoughts to be able to color, to see space in three

dimensions, to read words, to think in words again, and to relearn her area of expertise as a professional neural anatomist. She was a newborn in an adult body with a second chance in character development. She could choose what emotions she considered acceptable. It is a remarkable story, showing humanity made in the image of God with innate abilities to belong to a new heaven and a new earth. She unfortunately is not a believing Christian. Jewish scholars say that God pronounced good all that he created, except after creating man, because he has given us free will to choose for good or evil. So she was left with a question:

Although I rejoiced in my perception of connection to all that is, I shuddered at the awareness that I was no longer a normal human being. How on earth would I exist as a member of the human race with this heightened perception that we are each a part of it all, and that the life force energy within each of us contains the power of the universe?<sup>2</sup>

She came so close to God's revelation of a new heaven and a new earth when she was able to

reframe her right-brain negative thought, "Why do I have to go back [to normal life of both left and right brains working together]?" to a positive right-brain picture, "Why did I get to come to this place of silence?" The expansiveness of the silent images was pure bliss. But it also had the infection of sin in the desire to abandon the outward focus on God and neighbor for the sake of self, with the skewed thought that "the life force energy within each of us contains the power of the universe."3 Just think what God has really created within us! The resurrection of Jesus Christ both assures us and anchors us in him and through him to God the Father. It is the inauguration of the new heaven and a new earth in his good time.

Our Mother Foundress died on Easter Day, 1896; and the sisters' Chaplain, Father Arthur Lowndes, preached an unusual Resurrection sermon the follow-

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ing week, knowing the state grief and uncertainty in the house. It was titled "Fair through Love." At first, this di not seem an appropriate title. H looked at John 20:1-10, an declared that it "does not give an account of our Lord's resu rection, but an account of the trouble of the two holy women the disappearance of the book from the grave, and of how the two disciples entered the empo sepulcher. The Church, had w no teaching beyond Easter Da would leave us in an utter unce tainty concerning the resurred tion of Christ . . . If, however you study the Gospel attentive: you will find that the real lesso of it lies hidden just in tw words, 'he believed.' Peter we into the sepulcher and saw th evidence with his outward sem es — the linens in place, the boo gone. John went in and "saw the empty tomb the accord plished promise of his Lord; him the empty tomb is eviden of things unseen. His love h quickened his faith, and 'I believed'."4

The Sisters in 1896 were like the disciples. Their beloved Moth Harriet was gone, despite mar prayers for her recovery

thly health. They saw an pty shell of her. Some guesned the power of their prayer; ne understood the difference ween healing of the physical dy and wholeness of a spirituoody in God's Kingdom (ICor. 44). Fr. Lowndes made the int that "How great, then, the ief of St. John, since he ieved [in the Resurrection], ugh he was not prepared to lieve. His belief may be scribed as akin to that intuon which we all possess in ard to those whom we love."5 e Sisters passed through the ne stages of feeling as the disles. Like Mary Magdalene, the ters mistook the Lord for the rdener as they looked for the w Eden without Mother rriet. Like the disciples on the d to Emmaus, they could be olish and slow of heart, but ev recognized Jesus in the aking of bread. They feared it they saw a ghost instead of spiritual body of the Lord, d they rapidly returned to eir ordinary routines like fishin the Sea of Galilee and were prised to see Him in the roues of the convent. Even then, y had to be upbraided for ir unbelief and hardness of ert in order to be able to hear

the Great Commission and say with Thomas, "My Lord and My God." It is not the evidence of our senses that will ever make us believe, any more than it did St. Peter. What we need is a loving heart. Father Lowndes observed of the Sisters in 1896, "You sorrow for the loss of one gone before, you weep by the fresh grave. So did Martha; but her love for Lazarus and for Christ made her pierce beyond the shadows of this world, and believe, with a faith that awes us in its intensity and loyalty, that Christ is the Resurrection and the Life."6

Bishop N.T. Wright describes the Resurrection well when he says, "The resurrection completes the inauguration of God's kingdom . . . The resurrection is not an isolated supernatural oddity proving how powerful, if apparently arbitrary, God can be when he wants to. Nor is it a way of showing that there is indeed a heaven awaiting us after death. It is the decisive event demonstrating that God's kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven."7 He has helped me realize how Plato's theory of forms has influenced those of us educated in the West.

This asserts that non-material forms or ideas possess the higher and more basic kind of reality over the material world known to us through sensation. And so gradually we have slid into a mental picture of the present as living on earth here and now and the future as living in heaven in bliss if we are true believers in Jesus' resurrection. Bishop Wright is making a clarion call for reuniting earth and heaven into a unity within the post-resurrection world as God's plan in redeeming the world so that we now pray "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

So if anyone were to ask me, "Where are you going when you die?", I think I shall answer, "Nowhere else, but here." I shall be transformed so that I shall see God in my flesh, just like Job he who is my friend [and King] and not a stranger. Wouldn't that be the greatest joke? The delightful irony of being in heaven at the same time as on earth! I think that's why I liked Star Trek and much of the science fiction genre. It gives our imaginations the opportunity to explore Mary's question "How can this be?" without fear and find out that our associations of place with sadness and pain can be tran formed to joy and bliss equal as well as those 'thin' places happiness and wholeness cearth. The communion of sain is an extension of that though Those who preferred to avoing company here on earth who be my welcome companions and fellow laborers in the vineyard the new earth. Alleluia! The Loris risen!

- Mother Mirian St. Mary's Conver Greenwich, New Yo

Notes:

- 1. Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D, My Stroke Insight, (New York; Penguin Grou 2006) p. 75.
  - 2. Ibid., p. 73.
  - 3. Ibid.
- 4. Arthur Lowndes, "Faith through Love", www.anglicanhistory.org
  - 5. Ibid., p. 12 6. Ibid., p. 16
- 7. N.T. Wright, Surprised by How Rethinking Heaven. the Resurrection a the Mission of the Church, (HarperCollin 2008) p. 234



### THANK YOU

A hearty thanks to Mr. Willia Atwood for many years of ser ice as a Hillspeak Trustee.

## Hannah's Song

he story of Hannah and her ayer found in I Samuel is both autiful and dangerous. Her sperate desire to conceive is mersed in an ancient culture nerein a woman's identity was extricably tied to her ability to ve children. It's easy to recast is story in the light of Iannah's life was fulfilled nen she got pregnant," but that esn't do it justice. There's a lot ore to Hannah than that.

the story, we read that annah, tortured by her husnd's other wife, wanted a baby badly that she refused to eat hile others celebrated. She ayed so fervently that she was istaken for an intoxicated baber. She wanted to conceive so sperately that she bartered th God, offering to give up any ild God might give her.

lave you ever wanted someing so badly that you'd do anying for it? A show on television
sts this sentiment in an unholy
tht — Nurse Jackie on
owtime. The main character,
ayed by Edie Falco, is addicted
pills, and, there's another
aracter whose self-appointed

job it is to take her to such a low point in her addiction that she'll beg for sobriety. Although I don't keep in close touch with the show and may have missed some important developments, I have seen that desperate side of Nurse Jackie — that urge that will lead her to do just about anything to get high. There's something both inhuman and basic to our species about that sort of desperation.

Hannah's example, though, is a holy one. Sure, there's an element of self and ego in her quest. She wants to make her husband happy. She wants to flout her motherly success in front of her rival, the other wife. She wants the personal, individual fulfillment of being a mother - of having her dream accomplished. But that's not the end of her desire. She wants a child so badly that she's willing to give it up: "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant, and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but will give to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life."

Within her attempt to bargain with God is an admission that

she doesn't have any control over the answer that she's waiting for. Essentially, that's the nature of prayer. We come before God, asking for his help, because we can't do it on our own. Hannah's prayer, therefore, is an archetype of faithful supplication. By offering to give up whatever son she is given, Hannah acknowledges her total dependence on God and, in recognition of that, is willing to let God remain in control of her would-be son's life.

I wonder whether that's a useful test for my own personal desires. When I really want something, do I want it only for my own sake — according to my own wants and needs and desires — or do I want it for a bigger purpose — according to God's will and plan? Am I willing to give up control of how God will answer my prayers?

As her story continues, Hannah conceives and bears a son, and, sure enough, faithful to her vow, she gives him up to the Lord. As she does so, she sings a song of triumph: "My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord . . . The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to

Sheol and raises up. The Lormakes poor and makes rich; He brings low, he also exalts." When her prayers are finally answered and she has the child for whom she has pined, Hannah views the birth not as a sign that she gowhat she was looking for but assets testament to God's never-failing sovereignty, and that enables he to make good on her promise to give him up. Ultimately, God in control — both when prayer are answered and when they are not.

When I am desperate for Go to give me something, am I als willing to give it up? Perhap that's the moment at which ou prayers are truly answered When we submit to God's will s completely that we accept that the answer to our prayers wi always be identical to God's wil that's when we discover that God has already answered ou prayers. Of course, whether w see it or not, that's always th case. God's will is God's wil God is eternally in control. Th only question is whether I ca accept that.

The Rev. Evan D. Garne
 St. John's
 Montgomery, Alabam

## More than a Prophet

Jesus began to speak to the crowds scerning John: "What did you go t into the wilderness to behold? see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and re than a prophet..." (Matthew 7-9).

I'm never ready for the preachg of John the Baptist. Yet, I gerly anticipate the season of dvent and hearing again from hn. I can hear John saying, teady or not, here I come." I h't celebrate the birth of Christ til I allow the Baptist to shock e, wake me from sleep, chalnge me, tell me to repent. I ed to hear John's words, but n not ready.

When John the Baptist first peared, Israel had not heard a ophet speak for more than 450 ars! Imagine our world today the last prophetic voice spoke the 16th century. Our world s changed dramatically in just last 100 years. Prophets have itiated powerful change in tery part of human life — relion, politics, science, education, ciety, business, technology.

It was not so in John the ptist's time. Malachi was the st prophet to call for a return to e faithful covenant relation-

ship between God and Israel. Malachi condemned corrupt worship. He challenged priests to teach godliness, righteousness, obedience to God's ethical demands. After Malachi there was no one for 450 years!

Malachi joins Isaiah in looking forward to the time when God's messenger will cry out in the desert. (3:16) This messenger will appear suddenly. No one will be ready. This messenger will issue the ancient prophetic call for repentance. This messenger will announce the Lord's judgment. We might not be ready for judgment, but we can prepare.

John told soldiers and tax collectors to just do their jobs honestly — don't cheat, don't rob, don't abuse. John told everyone to share (Luke 3:10-14). He called the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Scribes, "Vipers" fleeing from the Lord's judgment. They would not change their ways. They would not bear "good fruit."

Clearly John was seen as a prophet. The other John, the beloved disciple, in the fourth Gospel tells us that the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem out to the wilderness to question the Baptist. "Are you Elijah? Are you a prophet?" The

Baptist simply replied, "I am the voice crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord...'"

Jesus came to John for baptism. Jesus proclaimed that John was "more than a prophet." Jesus' own sense of call is related to John's preaching and ministry. John announces Messiah's com-

ing.

Getting ready, preparing for Christ in the season of Advent, has little to do with all we want to do to celebrate Christmas in a couple of weeks. Getting ready, preparing for Jesus, means taking John the Baptist's words to heart. It also means to take the example of his life and live our lives accordingly.

Think of John the Baptist's

Christmas list.

1. Do good, share generously

2. Speak the truth, always, to everyone

3. Make no compromise with evil, sin, or hypocrisy

4. Live patiently, endure suffering

5. Die faithfully, knowing Jesus as the Messiah

The Rev. Robert H. Malm,
 Grace Church,
 Alexandria, Virginia

### Bicycle Prayers

One of the things I love most about the Shenandoah Valley the time I get to spend bicycling Being out on a bike — whether on roads in the countryside of the trail by the New River or use on the Blue Ridge Parkway whether it's a blazing hot day it high summer or a mellow after noon when the leaves haw changed; whether the sunshining or I'm racing ahead of looming thunderstorm — being out on a bike is a place I love to be.

I find cycling good for the body - and I also find it good for the soul. There is a thing that har pens sometimes when I'm out of a good ride: I'm cruising along my legs and arms and lungs an heart are all working, my bod has risen into a rhythm that feel smooth and exerting and ener gizing all at the same time, th bike is rolling easily and th miles are passing, the colors an textures and sounds and smell around me are sharp and vivi in my awareness - and it seem as though my mind quiets down all the background chatter that usually fills my mental enviror ment grows still, and I'm simpl pre, pedaling and experiencing, periencing and pedaling, givg and receiving in a constant cle of Being in body and in ind and in soul. I suppose it is a bit of a Zen quality to it. It els like freedom and expanseness and joy and gratitude, going round-and-round each her and growing together, like the wheels of my bike that roll e down the road.

I think this experience is a kind prayer. Not "specific prayer," e prayers of intercession or tition, but "open prayer," ayer that seeks nothing more and nothing less - than a en sense of the presence of bd, the flow of God's creative wer into the coming-together the present moment. It is the turn of thanks to God for the ft that this moment, just this oment, should be. One of the acious gifts of God that come me on the trail is this experice of "bicycle prayers."

like to think of these moments "bicycle" prayers for another ason. Moments like these help hold together the "bi-cycles," two cycles that complement dompete with each other in e. For many of us, life can seem to a tug-of-war between activi-

ty and passivity, work and play, exertion and rest, giving and receiving, togetherness and solitude, the public face we show to others and the private heart that nobody knows, the body and the spirit, the *suchness* of the world and the *allness* of God.

Keeping my balance on two wheels seems like an metaphor for keeping my balance between two sets of claims on my life, two sets of forces in my world. And the joy and expansiveness that come in those prayer-moments of simply being there on my bike in God's creation help me to stay focused on the grace that gives me balance, the gift of God that moves me onward, the creative love of God that weaves the worldly many into one. The rhythm of my bicycle reminds me of the rhythm of my life, and the rhythm of the life of Christ within me.

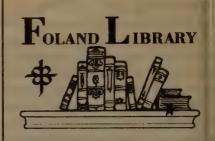
These prayers aren't limited to bicycles, but come to us whenever God's grace gives us balance for work and play, speech and silence, doing and being in the presence of God.

> The Rev. Dr. Paul S. Nancarrow, Trinity, Staunton, Virginia

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## Love Generously

There was a time in my life nen the primary focus of tristmas was on what I would t. I remember counting the ys and having trouble getting sleep because "visions of gar plums danced in my ad." I don't think we got a lot modern standards, but that isn't the point. It seemed like a at the time.

My earliest childhood memois come from a time before telision and widespread awaress of how the rich and famous red. My family didn't have uch, but I didn't know that, the expense of presents wasn't iportant, at least not to chilen. It was the magic of the hole thing — colored paper, ight tinsel, and delicious crets. I can recall only a handl of actual things that I got, that I can still feel was the anticlation and excitement.

I don't apologize for that emingly self-centered vision of e season. It was what I was couraged to be and it was propriate for a child. They told e that Santa Claus brought esents to good little boys and tls, and I gave it a shot. I was t sure how good I could be,

but all children knew deep down that perfection wasn't required. Santa Claus was a softie.

It wasn't long before the emphasis of Christmas shifted from getting to giving. As a parent, one of my greatest joys was to shower my children with what seemed to them an avalanche of presents. The brightness of their eyes made it worth it. It was a sign, as limited and imperfect as it was, of an extravagant love that burned in my heart every day of the year.

I remember more about the gifts I have given over the years than things I received. It was exciting to find just the right thing for someone. It didn't have to cost a lot to be a treasure. In truth, it didn't have to be a treasure to the other person. It was a treasure for me because it was what I wanted to give. It spoke of love and affection.

Christmas is not always an easy time. Losses can be intensified and loneliness takes on a sharper edge. Families are often spread out and out of touch. Memories can be filled with the ghosts of disappointment as well as gifts of joy. It can be a time of too much — too much to do, too much to celebrate, too much to eat and drink. It can be a time of

too little — too little money, too little ability to meet our expectations.

But at its best, at its deepest point, Christmas touches the spirit of generosity and love that lives in the heart of each of us. There comes a moment when gift-giving goes beyond obligation and captures something holy. Sometimes, as a gift of pure grace, there comes a moment when the pride and fear that keep us apart are melted by the love that draws us together. No matter that it doesn't last. The glimpse of the moment is enough.

Peace will come not through the might of armies or the waging of war. It will come through the innocence and vulnerability of love. The greatness of our community — our city, our state, our country, our world — will come not through the brilliance of our solutions to problems or the ascendency of one idea over another. Whatever greatness we find will come as the generosity of our love spreads beyond the limits of our own.

The ultimate message of Christmas is one of hope. We give and receive with a mixture of motives. But somewhere we know with the certainty that can only be called faith that our ger erosity is but a dim reflection of the extravagance of God.

"For God so loved the work that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." We stretch for love and justice because we have been loved far beyond anything we could have hoped for. With the kind of love, how could we fail We can never out-love or out give God. What we can do is low with abandon and joy. May the joy of Christmas fill your hearts."

— The Very Rev. Joe Reynold: Christ Church Cathedra Houston, Texa

### Ring Out the Old

Ring out the old, ring in the new,

Ring, happy bells, across the snow:

The year is going, let him go;

Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1850

### Wisdom, Power, and Worship

The story of the wise men and ir star-inspired journey to k the new-born King of the vs has a deep appeal. If the rative is compelling, so also is teaching about faith, hope, I charity, the three virtues ich relate directly to God, and ich fit us for participation in life.

th: The journey of the wise n in quest of the new-born ng of the Jews is inspired by a r. The wise men of ancient sopotamia studied the stars, d both modern astronomy and rology originate from them. e star, however, does not ide the wise men to the Child. eir common sense, or natural son, brings them to Jerusalem the obvious place to find a w-born Jewish king. But the ly king of the Jews they find is aging tyrant, Herod. Yet rod (for reasons of his own) mmons the priests and scribes, guardians of the Old stament scriptures, who refer wise men to the prophecy of cah 5:2: that the Messiah ould be born in Bethlehem, the v of David. It is only when

they set out in obedience to the teaching of the Scriptures that the star now guides them to the Child — a sign confirming the testimony of the Scriptures.

If you want to find Christ, your own wisdom is not enough. Your own common sense and natural reason will not lead you to him; only a faithful knowledge of and obedience to the Scriptures will lead you there. To acquire that wisdom, there is no substitute for actually reading the Bible and learning from the Church and its teachers how to understand it. That means bringing a sense of expectation to sermons and to other means of learning about the Faith; hearing and receiving them with an inquiring mind and heart; seeking to hear and receive the Word of God that speaks through the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.

Hope: Herod plots to kill Messiah, and the chief priests and scribes who are the guardians of the Scriptures (whether through complicity or intimidation is not specified) do not seem to heed them. Herod's response is outrageous and the priests' depressing; but St.

Matthew does not waste time in outrage or despair. He does not gloss over their failures, but what he shows us is the triumph of God's redeeming purpose despite the failures of the institutions of church and state. Herod's cunning is no match for the wisdom of God; though Herod seeks to use the wise men to find the Messiah and kill him, God is using Herod to bring the wise men to Messiah to worship him. Though the scribes and priests do not heed the Scriptures they profess to revere, God calls Gentiles (pagans) out of the east who do.

Complacency and worldly optimism are ruled out, but so is despair and bitterness of spirit. Railing against the tawdry compromises of the world rarely does much to change them. "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness." Yes, there are disappointments, but disappointments have this salutary effect: that subjecting ourselves to the will of God, we might learn to put our trust and hope in his power to bring his purposes to fruition. Prayer is the exercise of this hope.

Charity: The journey of the wise men ends in worship: "they . . .

fell down, and worshipped him and when they had opened the treasures, they presented unhim gifts: gold, and frankii cense, and myrrh." Only what offered to Christ is transformed by him and fulfilled with him grace and benediction. In the offering of ourselves in love we make ourselves over to God; the he may have his way with us.

We may offer ourselves to Go in every act of worship (an whenever we make the sign the cross); but there are tw moments in the liturgy which express this explicitly. One is the General Thanksgiving Morning or Evening Praye "giving up ourselves to thy ser ice, and walking before thee holiness and righteousness a our days." The other is in the Holy Communion. As we receive the tokens of Christ's body an blood offered for us upon th cross, so we are taught in the Prayer of Consecration to off ourselves, "our souls and bodie to be a reasonable, holy, and li ing sacrifice unto God." That an offering of gold, frankincens and myrrh.

The Rev. Gavin G. Dunba
 St. John'
 Savannah, Georg

m the Editor ...

## A Call to Raise our Preaching Standards

The global church (and glicans) lost a titan not long b, when John R. W. Stott (1921-1) passed from this world to next. One is only now getg a sense of the stone God pped into the pond of history ough this remarkable man, as ar more ripples move through waters of those whose lives a ministries he touched.

ohn Stott was above all a acher, and as such he modd a craft that is increasingly

ak in the West.

ly mother taught English, and had a life-long conversation out writer-based versus readbased prose. Good articles I books do the work for the der, she insisted — they reach and draw you in.

Or. Stott was a listener-based eacher. I do not mean by s that he allowed his potential dience to set the topic; nothing ald be further from the truth.

was someone who sought expound Holy Scripture oughout his life.

But he did it through making an argument that one who heard him could follow. As you listened you had the sense that John had wrestled mightily with the text so that you would not need to. More than one person has quipped that John Stott made St. Paul more understandable than Paul himself did!

I will always remember him speaking on the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles about the mission to Thessalonica. He observed with great care the verbs used in the passage to describe what Paul was trying to do—argue, explain, prove. Then he noted with real force that in response some were "persuaded" by what had been presented. How many times, he asked, do we hear that response to contemporary sermons?

I pray that we might learn to follow in the footsteps of this persuasive preacher. Let us wrestle hard with the text, but let us also present a coherent narrative which is easy to follow. So easy to follow, in fact, that many who did not even wish to hear it will find themselves grabbed

and drawn in.

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-ba

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